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THE
SCRIPTURE ACCOUNT
OF THE
S H E C H I N A H.

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BY STEPHEN SEWALL, A.M. A.A.S.

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“The glory of the **LORD** appeared unto all the congregation.”
Numb. xvi. 19.



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САРІЯНІЯ СОЮЗНА

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САНКТ-ПЕТЕРБУРГСКАЯ ПУБЛИЧНАЯ БИБЛИОТЕКА
САНКТ-ПЕТЕРБУРГСКАЯ ПУБЛИЧНАЯ БИБЛИОТЕКА



САНКТ-ПЕТЕРБУРГСКАЯ ПУБЛИЧНАЯ БИБЛИОТЕКА
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САНКТ-ПЕТЕРБУРГСКАЯ ПУБЛИЧНАЯ БИБЛИОТЕКА

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Discourse was read, some years since, in the University at Cambridge, when the author's health permitted him to be on the HANCOCK Foundation there. No alterations are now made, except in such expressions, as were peculiar to time and place of delivery.

ADDITIONAL

1. The following difficulties
exist, some arise since in the Uni-
versity at Cambridge when the
Sabbath is kept by persons who
ought to observe it.
No distinction is now made
between high exorcision as more
peculiar to this than those of the

rest.



S H E C H I N A H.

THE author of the epistle to the Hebrews begins his letter, with incidentally reminding those to whom he wrote, that God had formerly, at sundry times, communicated his mind to the fathers or ancients, *in divers manners*. Every mode and degree of revelation was doubtless exactly adapted to the then state and exigency of mankind. The whole human race, taken collectively, is not unlike to a single person, in this respect, that they have had their infancy, childhood, youth, and are now growing up to mankind. As, in the case of an individual, the faculties open gradually, such instructions only, as are proportionate to the capacity, can be administered with success. The babe must be fed with milk; while he, who is of mature age, can digest strong meat.* The case is similar, in a mor-

* Heb. v. 12.

al sense, with respect to the whole species. This circumstance should be carefully attended to, in order “to justify the ways of God to men.” In the early ages of the world, the ideas of mankind, like those of children, were circumscribed chiefly by the objects of sense. In condescension, therefore, to their weaknesses, the Deity appointed them a worship, consisting principally in “carnal ordinances ;” such, however, as were proper to lead their minds, as they opened and improved, to more spiritual objects.* It was also in adaptation to the lowness of their conceptions, that the Deity was pleased to tabernacle among men,† by certain visible symbols, to which they might repair for counsel and direction, and whence they received answers by audible voice, or in other ways adapted to strike the senses. These visible symbols are, in scripture, called *the face, the countenance, the presence, the name, and the glory*, of God or JEHOVAH. The word *Shechinah*, though of frequent use among divines, is of more modern date. It is, however, intended to denote the same thing, *the tabernacling of God with men.*‡ A clear idea of these symbols of the divine presence, and of the manner of worshipping before them, will enable us to comprehend the propriety of many expressions in

* Gal. iii. 24

† Psalm lxxviii. 60.

‡ John i. 14.

scripture, which otherwise would appear obscure, if not unintelligible. I shall therefore, in the first place, give such a description of the Shechinah, as the most express testimony of scripture warrants ; and then apply the idea, thence obtained, to the illustration of several passages in the sacred oracles.

The tabernacle, which Moses was directed to make, we are authorised, from the epistle to the Hebrews, to say, was a *figure* or faint representation of heaven. The author, having spoken of the tabernacle, and of Christ as an high priest, observes, that “ Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the *figures* of the true ; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.”* And because the tabernacle was to be “ an example and shadow of heavenly things,” Moses was strictly enjoined to make every part of it according to the pattern divinely shewed him in the mount.† In this tabernacle, and afterwards in Solomon’s temple, which, in some respects, was built after the same model, resided the symbols of the divine presence, or the glory of the Lord. As the tabernacle typified heaven, so the glory of the Lord, dwelling in it, adumbrated “ the Majesty on high, the Majesty in the heavens ;” “ at the right hand of which Christ now sits, in the true

* Heb. ix. 24. + Heb. viii. 5. Exod. xxv. 40.

tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not man."* In order the better to conceive of the symbols of the divine presence in the tabernacle, and of the manner of worshipping before them, it will be necessary to have a general idea of the situation, construction, and furniture of the tabernacle itself.

The tabernacle, whenever it was pitched (for it was a moveable tent) was to front the east,† on which quarter was the only entrance into it. Adjoining to the front was a court or open square, inclosed with hangings of fine twined linen, fastened to pillars, set up at proper distances, five cubits, or about eight feet high.‡ In this court, and near the door of the tabernacle, was the altar of burnt offerings, and the laver for the priests to wash in.§ The tabernacle itself was covered on all sides with curtains of curious workmanship. It was divided into two apartments. The first or eastern division was called the sanctuary|| or holy place; and the curtain, separating it from the court, was stilyed the first veil. The furniture of this room was the table of shew-bread, placed on the north side and near the west end; the candlestick, opposite to it, on the south side; and the altar of incense was set between them, before the entrance into

* Heb. i. 3. viii. 1, 2. † Numb. iii. 23, 38. ‡ Exod. xxvii. 9, 18.

§ Exod. xl. 29, 30.

|| Heb. ix. 2.

the western apartment. The hanging that divided the two rooms was called the second veil, and the western room, the holy of holies, or most holy place.* In this apartment was put the ark, containing the two tables of testimony or the ten commandments. The cover or lid of the ark, which was a kind of chest, was denominated the mercy seat. On the ends of the mercy seat were placed two cherubims, with their faces inclined towards each other and towards the mercy seat ; while their wings stretched out, so as to cover or overshadow it.† Above the mercy seat, and between the cherubims, resided the glory of the God of Israel. "There," saith the Lord to Moses, "I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee, from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony."‡ The ark was situated in the middle of the holy of holies, at least as measured from north to south. So that the ark, the entrance into the holy of holies, the altar of incense, the door of the tabernacle, communicating with the court, and the altar of burnt offerings in the court, lay in a right line from east to west, dividing the tabernacle into two equal parts. Upon this account, whatever was offered upon either of the altars, is said to be done before [literally before the face of] the Lord ; that is, be-

* Heb. ix. 3. † Exod. xxv. 11—22. ‡ Exod. xxx. 6.

§ Exod. xxx. 8. Lev. ix. 2.

fore the symbol of his presence between the cherubims. This symbol was a cloud. "I will appear," saith the Lord to Moses, "in the cloud upon the mercy seat."* When tokens of favour were shewn, the cloud became luminous and shining. Hence those expressions, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance;† thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth; cause thy face to shine," &c. The proceeding of fire from the cloud of glory was sometimes also a token of favour and acceptance. Thus, when Aaron had offered sacrifices first for his own sins, and then for those of the people, and had blessed them, "the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the people. And there came a fire out from before," or the presence of "the Lord, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat."‡ In this way, it is probable, the Lord shewed his respect to Abel and to his offering.§ At other times fire came forth from the same divine presence to execute vengeance upon bold transgressors. An instance we have in the case of Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron.|| They presumed to offer strange fire before the Lord; that is, to make use of common fire, not of that upon the altar of burnt offerings, which alone they were enjoined to use, to burn

* Lev. xvi. 2. † Psalm iv. 6. lxxx. 1, 3, 7. ‡ Lev. ix. 23, 24.

§ Gen. iv. 4. Heb. xi. 4. || Lev. x. 1, 2.

incense upon the golden altar in the holy place.* “And there went out fire from the Lord [in the original, from the face or presence of the Lord] and devoured them, and they died there before the Lord.”† In the same literal sense, perhaps the Psalmist is to be understood, when he says, “Our God shall come and shall not keep silence: A fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him.”‡ “A fire goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies round about.”§ Hence the expression, “Our God is a consuming fire.”||

From this account of the glory of the Lord, as residing in the tabernacle, and afterwards in the temple, we may form an idea in what way the Lord appeared to good men and conversed with them, in the more early ages, of which the history is very short, and particulars seldom mentioned. It was doubtless much in the same manner, as afterwards under the Mosaic economy. Thus, when the Lord first appeared to Moses, to commission him to deliver his brethren out of Egypt, it was “in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush.”¶ And before the tabernacle was built, the presence of the Lord accompanied the Israelites “in a cloud by day and fire by night.”** So when “the Lord made a

* Lev. xvi. 12. Numb. xvi. 46. + Lev. x. 42. ‡ Ps. l. 3.

§ Ps. xcvi. 3. || Deut. iv. 24. ix. 3. Heb. xii. 29.

¶ Ex. iii. 2. ** Exod. xxxiii. 14.

covenant with Abraham, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land;* the appearance was “a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp,” whence probably the voice proceeded.

In a way not much different, I apprehend, from that in the tabernacle, it was, that the Lord God conversed with Adam in innocence. When our first parents had unhappily lost their robe of innocence and glory, they were ashamed to be seen; and therefore, it is observed, when “they heard the voice,” or found, “of the Lord God walking in the garden—they hid themselves from the presence,” or face, “of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden.”† The voice or sound they knew, as having often heard it before; the presence it proceeded from they had often beheld, and for that reason, now their glory was departed, they were afraid to see. The language is plain, and, I believe, to be understood without a figure. The presence of the Lord God was something visible, perhaps it was the same with the cherubims and flaming sword, afterwards “placed at the east of the garden of Eden.”‡ The original text seems to intimate this by having the emphatic article prefixed to Cherubims and flaming sword, or rather sword-like flame. Our translators omit the article. The

* Gen. xv. 17, 18. + Gen. iii. 7, 8. See Acts ii. 2, 3.

‡ Gen. iii. 24.

verse literally rendered, runs thus: "And he placed *the* cherubims and *the* flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." I will not strenuously insist on this grammatical criticism, but must say, that the text, literally translated, naturally leads us to conclude, that before Adam was expelled the garden, the cherubims and the flaming sword were placed somewhere else, perhaps in the middle of the garden.* And ascherubims, whatever they were, and a luminous, often a flaming, cloud, were afterwards appointed the symbols of the divine presence, it seems inferible from the analogy of the divine conduct, that they should be so to Adam. Man in innocence differed in nothing so much, as in his innocence, from fallen man. He needed the same mode of instruction in divine things before, as he did after, he had transgressed: And the invisible God is "the same yesterday and to day, and forever!"†

I am aware, the common opinion is, that these cherubims and flaming sword, at the east of the garden of Eden, were placed there for terror only. The text, I apprehend, by no means necessarily implies that. On the contrary, it may have been done in mercy to our first parents. As they were driven out of the garden, it must

• Rev. xxii. 2.

+ Heb. xiii. 8.

have been an unspeakable favour to them, to have the symbols of the divine presence also removed, and placed without the garden. Otherwise they would have been driven out from the presence of the Lord, and left to wander in despair, as Cain afterwards was.* The using of the verb *pw* here, which we render *placed*, is favourable to the sense I have given. It is the same verb elsewhere made use of, when the symbols of the divine presence are said to be fixed in any particular place. Thus, Deut. xii. 11, “Then there shall be a place which the Lord your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there.” “And thou shalt eat before the Lord thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there.”† And Psalm lxxviii. 60, “He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent he placed among men.”

It is said indeed, that “the flaming sword turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.” It is agreeable to the divine economy to accomplish various purposes by the same means. It might answer that end, and yet be, at the same time, a symbol of the divine presence, before which our first progenitors were to present their oblations, and by which the Deity was pleased to hold intercourse with them, after their unhappy fall.

* Gen. iv. 12. See Gen. x. 8, 9.

† Deut. xiv. 23.

From the visible symbols of the divine presence vouchsafed to Adam, after he was expelled the garden of Eden, Cain, that first of murderers, next to the devil,* was excluded. But his case, and some things connected with it, shall be considered, further on. It may be observed here, that though the infinite and invisible Jehovah was pleased, in condescension to the weakness of human capacity, in its state of minority, to become as it were visible to men in particular places, and to "dwell on earth;"† yet mankind were cautioned, from time to time, by the prophets, not to "limit the Holy One;"‡ but "to consider in their hearts, that the Lord he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath;"§ that "the heaven, and heaven of heavens cannot contain him, much less any house or temple that should be built for him."||

Thus I have given, from the holy scriptures, a general account of the Shechinah, or glory of the Lord, residing in a visible manner among men, in the early ages of the world.

Under the Mosaic economy, the Shechinah or visible symbol of the divine presence was, as hath been before noticed, a cloud, residing between two cherubims, over the mercy seat covering the ark, which included the two tables or the ten

* John viii. 44. † 1 Kings viii. 27. ‡ Pf. lxxviii. 41.
§ Deut. iv. 39. || 1 Kings viii. 27. Imai. lxvi. 1.

commandments. When tokens of the divine complacence, in the conduct of the Israelites, were to be shown, the cloud became luminous and shining ; and upon special occasions, if sacrifices were offered with sincerity, fire issued from the cloud of glory to consume them upon the altar, in token of acceptance. When no special communications were to be made, the cloud was black and dark. Hence the Lord is said in scripture to dwell in “the thick darkness.”*

This cloud of glory is sometimes called the *throne* of God. Thus the prophet Isaiah styles it, chap. vi. 1, “In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon the *throne*, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.” This cloudy throne was placed, as was observed above, upon the ark, which contained the ten commandments, a transcript of the righteousness and equity of the divine character. The ark, therefore, might with propriety be called the base of this throne, and a basis of righteousness and judgment, as containing the ten commandments. In agreement with what has now been said, I apprehend, we are to understand the expression in the xcviith Psalm, “Clouds and darkness are round about him ; Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne ;”

Or more literally translated, “A cloud and

* Exod. xx. 21. 1 Kings viii. 12. 2 Chron. vi. 1.

thick darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the basis of his throne."

The visible symbol of the divine presence under the Mosaic dispensation, which in this respect differed not much from the patriarchal, was fixed in some one particular place, "the place which the Lord God chose to place his name," or "cause it to dwell, there,"* as the scripture expression is, This place was at first Shiloh;† afterwards, Gibeon;‡ and finally, Solomon's temple at Jerusalem.§ Before the symbols of the divine presence, or the name of the Lord, as they are often called, manifested in some one place, all the worship of the Mosaic dispensation was to be performed. "Jerusalem," says the Psalmist, "is builded as a city that is compacted together. Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord."|| Wherever, therefore, in the Old Testament, there occur the expressions, "to bring an offering unto the Lord; to come before the Lord, or into his presence; to call upon the name of the Lord," and the like; these several religious acts are always to be understood as performed in some one particular place; and the Lord, the name of the

* Deut. xii. 11. xiv. 23.

+ Joshua xviii. 1, 8.

‡ 1 Kings iii. 4. 1 Chron. xxi. 29.

§ 1 Kings viii. 1.

|| Psalm cxxii. 3, 4.

Lord, the presence or face of the Lord, &c. are to be understood of the cloud of glory, stationed in that place, where the Deity was pleased to manifest himself, by oracular voice, or in other ways, adapted to strike the senses, and influence the heart. And pious men, under that dispensation, esteemed it their greatest infelicity to be excluded the visible presence of the invisible God. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks," saith David, probably when he was persecuted by Saul, "so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: When shall I come and appear before God?"* Or, more literally, "When shall I come and see the face or presence, of God?" So the prophet Jonah, in his prayer in the fish's belly, laments his situation by saying, "I am cast out of thy sight," that is, I am excluded from the visible symbol of thy presence: "Yet," adds he, "I will look again towards thy holy temple,"† where that symbol was.

It may seem strange to us, who live under the Christian dispensation, when it is the will of God, "that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands;"‡ it may appear strange, I say, that a dispensation should ever have been instituted by the same divine authority, in which all the

* Psal. xlii. 1, 2.

+ Jonah ii. 4,

‡ 1 Tim. ii. 8.

most solemn acts of worship were directed and enjoined to be performed in one particular place. A probable solution of this difficulty is, that, in that puerile age of the world, when mankind were, from the grossness of their conceptions of the Deity, so prone to polytheism, this was a necessary institution, in order to cultivate and impress the idea of the unity of the Godhead.

In the patriarchal age, when the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were strangers and sojourners in the land of Canaan, and had no settled place of abode, the symbol of the divine presence was ambulatory, removing from place to place, for the convenience of those patriarchs; as it afterwards was, during the forty years wandering in the wilderness. Thus, when Abraham first entered the land of Canaan, the Lord *appeared* to him in Sichem; “and he there builded an altar unto the Lord, who *appeared* unto him.”* The same visible symbol of the presence of the Lord was vouchsafed him at Bethel, in the plain of Mamre, which is Hebron; and at Beersheba.† When the Lord appeared to Abraham, and made with him the covenant of circumcision, “Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee,”‡ or in thy pref-

* Gen. xii. 6, 7.

+ Gen. xii. 8, xxi. 33.

‡ Gen. xvii. 18.

ence: Which, I apprehend, is to be understood of living where he might enjoy the visible symbol of God's presence; for he saw, by the conduct of Sarah, that, unless some extraordinary interposition prevented, he should be obliged to banish Ishmael from his family, where the visible presence of the Lord was.

The same favour, that was granted to Abraham, was enjoyed by Isaac his son. While he sojourned in Beersheba, his wife Rebekah, being in doubt with respect to her circumstances, "went," as it is recorded in the xxvth chapter of Genesis "to inquire of the Lord;" and the Lord granted her an explicit answer to her inquiries. The expression "went to inquire of the Lord" is doubtless to be understood here in the same sense, as it certainly is to be taken in elsewhere in the Old Testament, that is, to go to the cloud of glory, the symbol of the divine presence, residing in a particular place; and there to supplicate Jehovah, who vouchsafed "to dwell," in a peculiar manner, "in the thick darkness" of the cloud.

It was in this same place, Beersheba, that Jacob "offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac,"* as he was going down, with his family, to sojourn in Egypt. Here also he had, at

* Gen. xlvi. 1, 4.

the same time, a special revelation, that "God would go down with him into Egypt, and would surely bring him up again." Hence we may infer, with a considerable degree of probability, that the Israelites enjoyed the visible symbol of God's presence, while they were in Egypt. For when God promises the patriarchs, that he would be with them, and be their God, we are, I apprehend, to understand, in an especial manner, his being with them by the visible symbol of his presence. This was one principal evidence they had, that Jehovah, the God of Israel, was the true God, and they his people. This, I think, is inferrible from the petition of Moses, in the affair of the golden calf, the god of Egypt, which Aaron made; and the answer of the Lord to it. "I pray thee," saith Moses to the Lord, "if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee," that is, in distinction from all false gods. The answer of the Lord is, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."* The context, I think, will warrant us to say, that by the "presence of the Lord" here is to be understood "the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night," which accompanied the camp of Israel in all their marches.†

* Exod. xxxiii. 13. + Exod. xiii. 21, 22. Numb. xiv. 14.
Deut. i. 33. Neh. ix. 19. Psal. lxxxviii. 14.

What has been said upon this subject will enable us better to understand the story of Cain and Abel. These persons are said to have brought, at a certain period, each his offering to Jehovah, of the produce of their respective occupations. Cain, who was a tiller of the ground, brought of the fruits which that produced; Abel, who was a shepherd, brought of the firstlings, or first-born of his flock.* The phrase, "brought an offering unto the Lord," seems to indicate that the invisible Lord Jehovah, though every where present, did, in that infant age of the world, manifest himself in a visible manner in some particular place; and that all oblations to the Deity, were to be presented in the place where the visible symbol of his presence was. And it seems from this story, that there was then some kind of tabernacle or tent, where the divine presence was manifested; as there afterwards was under the Mosaic dispensation. The original expression, which we here render in a very vague manner; "in process of time," will very well bear a more definite interpretation, "at the end of the year."† And it appears to me not improbable, that the time pointed at, was the same with the day of atonement under the law;‡ for many of the legal institutions were cop-

* Gen. iv. 3, 4. † 1 Sam. i. 3. ‡ Lev. xvi. 29, 30, 34.
xxiii. 27, 28.

ied from the usages of the patriarchs ; and that the day of atonement was at the same season of the year, in which expiatory sacrifices were first appointed, and was in commemoration of it. If this was the case, we see the reason why Cain's offering was not accepted. It was not of the expiatory kind, which was appointed for this season. And this seems to be intimated in the text itself. The text I refer to, is Gen. iv. 7, which has been variously interpreted by commentators. After Cain had discovered his displeasure at the divine preference, given to his younger brother, Abel, the Lord vouchsafes to address him, probably by audible voice from the cloud of glory, thus in our translation : " If thou dost well, shalt thou not be accepted ? and if thou dost not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him." This translation is certainly obscure ; and there are two objections besides, which lie against it. The first is, that it trespasses upon the grammar of the original, by rendering a verb of the infinite mood active (if, indeed, it is a verb, there being a noun of the same letters) in a finite mood passive ; "shalt thou not be accepted?" The other objection is, that it is too figurative for simple narration, as this seems to be. " Sin lieth at the door," is a very bold figure ; and the

latter part of the verse—"unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him," if you refer the pronouns *his* and *him* to *sin*, as many do, will be equally figurative. A more literal translation, and, perhaps better adapted to the circumstances of things at that time, is this: "If thou dost well, hast thou not the pre-eminence? and if thou dost not well, there is a sin-offering lying down at the door. And unto thee is his desire, and thou rulest over him." In justification of this translation, it may be observed, that the original word (תְּנִשְׁאֵל), in the first clause of the verse, is elsewhere in scripture used to denote that dignity and pre-eminence, which, in the early ages, a person enjoyed in right of primogeniture. Thus Jacob, addressing himself to Reuben, his eldest son, makes use of the same word. "Reuben, thou art my first-born—the excellency of dignity."* And the word (תְּנִשְׁתָּאֵל) in the second clause, is elsewhere rendered, and properly too, a *sin-offering*. The passages, where it is so used, are too numerous to be all quoted.† And the word (עֲבָדָה) is almost appropriated to the lying down of quadrupeds.‡

Now, in order to understand this short and, on that account, obscure, story, we must attend

* Gen. xlix. 3. † Lev. v. 9, and alibi *passim*. ‡ Isaiah xi. 6, 7, and elsewhere.

to these several things, that seem briefly to be hinted at in it. 1st. That there was then a tabernacle or tent, where the offerings were presented, intimated by the mention of its door. 2d. That the conversation, the Lord was pleased to hold with Cain, was within the tabernacle. 3d. The time of offering—at the end of the year, denoting, as I conceive, the day of atonement, when only animals were to be offered. 4th. The different occupations of the two brothers; the elder being a cultivator of the ground only; while the younger was a shepherd. 5th. That therefore Cain, in order to have presented the proper oblation, must have been obliged to his younger brother for it. And, lastly, the superiority of Cain over his brother, in right of primogeniture, signified by this expression, “ His desire is unto thee and thou rulest over him.”

The sense, then, of this text may, and perhaps truly, be expressed in paraphrase thus: “ If thy conduct is good, and agreeable to the directions I have given, thou hast indeed a right, by birth, to be preferred to thy younger brother. And if thy conduct has been faulty, I have ordained sacrifices to expiate guilt. And though thou hast neglected to provide them; yet even now it is not too late. There are now animals lying down at the door of the tabernacle, which

I have appointed to be offered at this season to make atonement for offences. Take of them for a sin-offering; they belong indeed to thy brother: But he is subject to thee, as to the elder brother. He will not deny them to thee."

Thus Cain, because his own occupation did not yield him the expiatory offering, prescribed for this season, presumed, of his own head, to offer only such things, as were of his own produce—"the fruits of the ground." And notwithstanding the divine admonition, and his superiority over Abel, he persisted in an obstinate refusal to be beholden to his younger brother, for animal sacrifices. This appears to have been Cain's sin, so far as respected the offering.

What followed is well known. He murdered his brother, and in punishment for it, was banished from the visible symbol of God's presence. "Behold," saith Cain to the Lord upon this occasion, "thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth," rather the ground or land under cultivation, as the word אָדָם here used, commonly signifies: * "And from thy face shall I be hid, and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth," זָרָא, the earth in the most comprehensive sense. † And further on in the same chapter, the sacred historian records,

* Gen. xlvi. 26, and elsewhere.

† Gen. ii. 1.

that "Cain went out of the presence of the Lord," that is the visible symbol of his presence and dwelt in the land of Nod." As Cain, before his exile, when he enjoyed the visible presence of the Lord, appears to have paid but very little regard to religion; it is probable, that afterwards, when he had abandoned his farms, and was hid, in the wilds of the earth, from the face or visible presence of the Lord, he had no religion at all. It is probably upon this account, that his female posterity are denominated "the daughters of men,"* or daughters of Adam. They could boast no higher title, than their earthly origin gave them. Whereas the posterity of Seth, who enjoyed the visible symbol of God's presence among them, and "called upon the name of the Lord,"† acquired the honourable appellation of "the sons of God."‡ In the same manner, under the christian dispensation, they who believe on the name of the only begotten Son of God, the great Shechinah, the brightness of the Father's glory,§ and worship God through him, in spirit and truth, have the high privilege of becoming the sons of God.

* Gen. vi. 2.

† Gen. iv. 26.

‡ Gen. vi. 2.

§ John i. 12, 14, &c.

THE END.

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